DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 366 940 CS 011 620

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TITLE A Cross-Age Reading Program: Building Fluency and Comprehension.
PUB DATE May 94
NOTE 32p.; M.A. Project, Kean College of New Jersey.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Masters Theses (042) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cross Age Teaching; Grade 2; Kindergarten Children; Peer Teaching; Primary Education; Program Effectiveness; *Reading Comprehension; Reading Improvement; Reading Instruction; *Reading Programs; Reading Research
IDENTIFIERS New Jersey; *Reading Fluency; *Repeated Readings

ABSTRACT

A study was designed to examine the effectiveness of repeated reading in fluency and comprehension. A cross-age reading program was used to give students a purpose for rereading material. The children in a second-grade classroom in a private school in suburban New Jersey were randomly assigned to two sample groups. The experimental group read to a kindergarten partner three times a week for eight weeks. The control group did puzzles or art projects with a kindergarten partner. Although data were not significant, findings suggest that repeated rereading over an extended period of time would be an effective method which could be used in basal and regular classroom instruction. Four tables of data are included. Contains 29 references. (Author/RS)

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ED 366 940

A Cross-Age Reading Program: Building Fluency and Comprehension

by
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Masters of Arts Degree
in Reading Specialization

Kean College of New Jersey
May, 1994

CS011620

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Abstract

This study was designed to look at the effectiveness of repeated reading on fluency and comprehension. A cross-age reading program was used to give students a purpose for rereading material. The children in a second grade classroom were randomly assigned to two sample groups. The experimental group read to a kindergarten partner three times a week for eight weeks. The control group did puzzles or art projects with a kindergarten partner.

Although the data were not significant, the results suggest that repeated rereading over an extended period of time would be an effective method which could be used in basal and regular classroom instruction.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank the many people who have helped in the completion of this study: my students at Timothy Christian who have been so cooperative and encouraging; Pam and Priscilla for always offering to help: Lois for her encouragement and prodding; and Laura for her unending hours on the computer, her willingness to help and for all her encouragement.

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Much of the time in the primary classroom is spent on reading instruction. There are so many skills to be taught to young readers that some basal readers suggest teaching two skills a day. Many times there is no time to go back and review skills already taught. Many skills are taught in isolation and the students are not given adequate time to practice the new skills. If so much time is spent on reading instruction and not on the actual task of reading, how then can we expect children to become fluent readers, able to read for comprehension?

Some researchers equate learning to read with learning to play a musical instrument or learning to perform a particular sport skill. When learning a new musical piece or sport skill, the musician or athlete practices over and over until that piece or skill has been mastered (Koskinen and Blum 1986). Samuels (1979) comments on the fact that because of the pressure to get through the material in the basal reader in one year, we often move children through a book "never having mastered a single page."

The first time a young reader reads a passage or story the focus is on decoding. When a student is focusing on word recognition, little is remembered or understood. However, in most classrooms, a story is only read once or twice. If the student was allowed to reread the material, each time it would become easier and the student would not need to spend as much time on decoding. Once the reader does not need to focus on decoding, he or she then can begin to focus on understanding the story.

Often the time spent reading in a classroom is round robin oral reading. Many times poor readers struggle through and lose all comprehension when reading orally in a round robin situation. Hoffman (1987) suggests that if used properly, oral reading does have a place in the classroom as part of the repeated reading procedure.

A procedure called repeated reading has been developed and is being used in classrooms. The procedure gives students the opportunity to practice reading. The procedure of rereading meaningful

text seems to have a significant effect on fluency, word recognition, and comprehension (Samuels 1979).

Paired repeated reading has taken the procedure of repeated reading and put it into practice in a fun and meaningful program. Paired repeated reading gives students an opportunity to both reread a passage and listen to a partner read. The idea of paired reading is to provide time for children to be engaged in the act of reading and to provide experiences with meaningful text as opposed to spending time decoding words in isolation (Koskinen and Blum 1986).

Both repeated reading and paired repeated reading give young readers the opportunity to practice the skill of reading and to become more fluent readers. However, can we assume that because a student is reading fluently he or she understands what is being read? O'Shea, Sindelar and O'Shea (1985) suggest that although students can read fluently and rapidly, it does not necessarily mean that they will automatically attend to comprehension. Their research concludes that a student who is cued in to comprehension and given a purpose for reading, will comprehend more than a student who reads for fluency or speed.

Therefore, in addition to giving students opportunities to practice reading a selection, we must also give a purpose for reading and provide comprehension cues. This will help to make them effective, skilled readers. We must not only check to see if students can answer questions about a story, but also we must teach them how to understand a story. As teachers we must teach children comprehension strategies and model the strategies for them.

Paired repeated reading can be taken a step further to ensure that we are also teaching children how to comprehend what they are reading. Labbo and Teale (1990) add another dimension to paired reading. In their cross-age reading program, Labbo and Teale add comprehension cues and strategies to repeated reading. In the process, the students not only practice reading a story but also formulate questions to

ask about the story. This is a practical way to model comprehension strategies for children and at the same time engage them in the activity of reading for a purpose.

Hypothesis

In order to provide further evidence on the effectiveness of repeated reading and cross-age reading, a study was conducted to determine the effects of a cross-age reading program on a class of second grade students. It was hypothesized that a cross-aged reading program which incorporates repeated reading will not significantly improve the comprehension, word recognition, and oral reading skills of second grade students.

Procedure

The subjects in the study were taken from a second grade classroom in a private school in a suburban area in New Jersey. The subjects include students from various ethnic backgrounds and reading abilities. The children were randomly assigned to two sample groups; experimental (Reading) and control group (Art- Puzzle). All subjects were pretested with the Gates MacGinitie Reading Test Form 1.

The children in the experimental sample (Reading) chose a new book each week from a pile selected by the teacher. The children read the book silently and orally several times a day. Each child in the experimental sample met with the teacher to practice reading and to formulate comprehension questions to ask the kindergartners with whom they would be paired. The experimental sample read to a kindergartner three times a week for fifteen minutes each day for eight weeks.

The children read the same book during the week changing partners each day. The children chose a new book every Monday. The teacher observed the students during the reading sessions and provided additional guidance and support as was necessary to make the activity a meaningful one for the children.

The children in the control group (Art- Puzzle) went to the kindergarten classroom during the reading sessions. The control sample helped their kindergarten pair put together a puzzle. Once a week the pairs would complete a simple art project together. The children in both samples received regular basal instruction during the study.

At the conclusion of the eight weeks, all the second graders were posttested with the Gates MacGinitie Reading Test Form 2 to determine mean differences in reading, if any. Mean differences were tested for significance using tests of t .

Results

The mean differences on the Gates MacGinitie Reading Test were tested for significance using tests of t.

Table I - Readers vs. Puzzle Pretest, Mean, Standard Deviation and t

	Mean	SD	t
Reader	3.09	.959	-.34
Puzzle	3.24	1.01	

Table II - Reader vs Puzzle Posttest Results

	Mean	SD	t
Reader	3.79	1.43	.21
Puzzle	3.66	1.01	

Table III - Readers: Pretest vs Posttest Results

	Mean	SD	t
Pretest	3.09	.959	-1.28
Posttest	3.79	1.43	

Table IV - Puzzle: Pretest vs Posttest Results

	Mean	SD	t
Pretest	3.24	1.01	-.88
Posttest	3.66	1.01	

As can be seen in Tables I-IV, mean differences between the samples were small at the outset of the study and they were not significant. When comparing the readers vs. puzzle on the pretest, the readers achieved a mean of 3.09 while the puzzle group achieved a mean of 3.24. The t was -.34, indicating that the mean of the puzzle group at the outset was higher. On the posttest the mean for the readers was 3.79 and the mean for the puzzle group was 3.66. The t test was .21 and again was not significant.

When comparing the readers' sample on the pre and posttest data, it can be seen that there was a seven month increase in the mean from 3.09 to 3.79. The t, as shown in Table III, was -1.28. The puzzle group increased only four months in this period from 3.24 to 3.66 with a t of -.88. (Table IV)

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of repeated reading on a class of second grade students. Although the data show the results of the study are not significant and thus the hypothesis was accepted, a closer look suggests that repeated reading used over an extended period of time would be beneficial to second graders.

The results may not have been significant due to the small number of subjects and the short time period over which the study was conducted.

The Reader group improved by seven months and the Puzzle group improved by four months in a two month period. The fact that the readers had a three month improvement over the non-readers suggests that a cross-age reading program used over an extended period of time could be an effective tool in improving fluency and comprehension.

Both the teacher and the parents of the readers observed that the children had gained a great deal of confidence in their reading skills throughout the experience. When questioned, the students felt they had improved as readers and felt that reading a story many times helped them

to understand the story better. Through the experience of writing and asking questions about the story, the students began to see reading as understanding a story and not just reading words.

The students were more careful about reading the material and asking about unknown words because they wanted to be able to read perfectly to their kindergarten partner. As the children read the story repeatedly, they began to have fewer miscues. When the children could read without concentrating on decoding, they enjoyed the stories more and had fun writing their own comprehension questions. The repeated reading appeared to aid the children's fluency and comprehension as the teacher observed through tape recordings of the children's reading.

Improvement in reading scores and informal observations suggest that both repeated reading and a cross-age program, when used over an extended period of time, would prove to be an effective method of improving the fluency and comprehension of young readers. Repeated reading appears to be an effective method which could be used in basal and regular classroom instruction.

Repeated Reading and Fluency: Related Literature

Much of the research done with repeated reading and fluency seems to indicate that not enough time is being spent on the actual task of reading in both developmental and remedial reading instruction.

Wyne and Stuck (1979) conducted a study with elementary students who were considered "behind in reading achievement" and were observed as students who did not spend time-on-task. Wyne and Stuck assigned students to two groups; a time-on-task group and a comparison group which remained in the regular classroom. The time-on-task group was placed in a highly structured time-on-task classroom for half of the day for an eight week period. The time-on-task students were given instruction and then given an individual packet with assignments. The subjects were given points for staying on task and completing assignments.

Results of the study show that the subjects who received the time-on-task intervention scored significantly higher on reading achievement tests than the comparison group. The results of the study show an important relationship between time-on-task and reading achievement.

Allington (1977) points out that although many educators have developed remedial programs and procedures, many poor readers remain poor readers. Allington suggests that perhaps this is because the focus of these programs is not on the task of reading. He states that the focus of remedial reading is skill instruction and drill, rather than reading.

Allington further suggests several ways we can give slow readers the chance to practice reading. One of his suggestions is to leave the slow reader alone when he or she is reading. The teacher should refrain from interrupting the reader and let him spend more time reading. Allington suggests giving students 500 word passages which at the slowest rate would take twenty minutes of reading. Allington also offers the practice of having children reading along silently or orally while the teacher reads. This is a great way to give the slow halting reader a positive experience in reading. Allington also advocates repeated reading and sustained silent reading as ways of giving slow readers opportunities to practice reading.

Allington (1980) was again concerned with poor readers not getting enough time to read. The purpose of the study was to look at the actual amount of time first and second graders were reading during reading instruction.

Twenty-four first and second grade teachers agreed to be observed during reading instruction. The observers noted the number of pages and words read by students in good and poor reading groups. The results of the study show that good readers were reading twice as many words as poor readers in reading sessions. The researcher also observed that many times poor readers were rarely asked to read silently. In a study done in 1980, Allington also found that poor readers' errors were treated out of context whereas good readers were corrected in the context of the text. Allington concludes that the practice of oral reading only with poor readers contributes to the lower number of words read. Teacher interruptions also take away from reading time for the poor reader. Allington suggests that poor readers need to be given more time to read silently both with the text and supplementary reading material. He concludes that it is extremely important for poor readers to be given more opportunity to read.

Allington (1983) again asks the question, "Why hasn't oral reading fluency become a major focus of beginning reading or early remedial instruction?" Allington reviews the research and contends that research does find fluency a necessary goal but he also states that not enough time is spent on teaching fluency. He also cites research that explains why fluency is not achieved by some readers. He gives six hypotheses for why children may or may not go from a word by word level of reading to a phrase level. One such hypothesis is that silent reading provides a way for students to reread sentences in order to understand phrases. He says that it is safe to assert that direct instruction in oral reading does help the reader move from "word by word" reading to a more efficient phrase reading

(Allington 1983). Because Allington feels that oral reading fluency is important, he suggests teacher modeling and repeated reading as two strategies to improve fluency.

Much of reading instruction in the elementary classroom is done in reading groups. Most of that reading group time is often spent in round robin reading. Hoffman (1987) contends that using round robin reading often reinforces inappropriate reading behaviors. Hoffman states that practices like round robin reading focus on single word recognition and not the whole story. He suggests a procedure where the teacher models the reading of the story and then guides the students through the comprehension of the story. After group discussion, the students use repeated reading to practice and master the story. According to Hoffman, as a result of the procedure, the children are able to make self corrections and are able to read entire sections of a story and retain comprehension.

S. Jay Samuels (1979) too discusses the importance of text being modeled and familiar to the students before they attempt oral reading. In his article, he explains the procedure of repeated reading. Samuels states that repeated reading should be used as a supplement to the developmental reading program.

Samuels (1979) suggests a procedure where students are given a short meaningful passage. Students reread the passage several times until a satisfactory level of fluency is reached. The purpose of the procedure is to give the students enough practice with and exposure to a paragraph so that word recognition becomes automatic. In his study, significant gains were made in both comprehension and reading speed.

Samuels compares reading to sports and music. The beginning music student is given a small piece to be practiced over and over until it is mastered. Samuels states that instead of letting children master reading, we quickly move them through stories and books and they never master any of it.

In her 1989 study, Lorraine Ludholdt suggests several techniques for improving oral reading which she calls, "fluent text behavior." She

states that at the same time a reader can improve rate, word recognition, and comprehension when using the techniques.

Ludholdt (1989) first suggests imitative reading. Imitative reading is when a student reads along while listening to a taped story. Another technique that she suggests is choral reading. This is a group activity using poems and stories. A third technique that Ludholdt suggests is repeated readings. Her suggestion is to have a student read a passage into a tape recorder to record reading rate and word recognition. Then the student rereads the passage several times individually. The student reads into the tape recorder again and the two taped readings are compared. Ludholdt concludes that with proper instruction and practice, all students can read fluently.

John Downs and Suzann Morin (1990) raise the question, "On what should reading teachers spend their time, reading fluency or comprehension?" The authors cite research that link fluency with comprehension. They also suggest several strategies that seem to improve fluency and comprehension at the same time. Downs and Morin note that two of the most effective strategies are Samuels (1979) repeated reading and the neurological impress method. Downs and Morin suggest a program including the two procedures. They also suggest that when trying to improve a students' reading fluency, the reader needs constant reinforcement and feedback.

Rasinski points out in his 1989 study that fluency is recognized as an important part of reading but yet still not a lot of time is spent on improving fluency. Rasinski looks at the fact that most of the time fluency training methods are used in remedial classes with small student to teacher ratios.

Rasinski (1989) offers many ways a "normal" classroom teacher can teach fluency to a greater number of children. The first thing the author suggests is repetition. He states that students should be exposed to the same words repeatedly in several texts and should be repeatedly

exposed to one text before moving to another. Rasinski also claims that the teacher should model fluency for students by reading literature to the class daily.

Students should also receive feedback when reading orally. Koskinen and Blum (1986) offer a procedure where students receive feedback from each other. Students also need support in the early stages of learning to read. Tape recorded stories, choral reading, and the neurological impress method all can give new readers the support they need.

Rasinski (1989) also suggests reminding readers that fluency includes reading chunks and phrases. He suggests marking chunks in the student text with penciled in dashes directly on the students' text. Rasinski also comments that students should be given the chance to read easier material so that the focus can be fluency instead of word recognition. He encourages teachers to design lessons for all students using two or more of the methods and principles.

Patricia Herman (1985) studied the effect of repeated reading on reading rate, number of pauses, and word recognition with "less abled" intermediate-grade students. One of the goals of her study was to see if the subjects would improve in these areas and whether the improvement would transfer to new unpracticed material. The subjects reread passages trying to reach the rate of 85 words per minute. The results of the study show improvement in all areas and show that the improvement in rate and word recognition did transfer to new material. Herman concludes that repeated reading does help intermediate grade students. Herman also points out that her results support the study skill method of rereading a story for comprehension. Herman states that repeated reading is also a good technique to use in the elementary classroom to provide children with more practice in reading.

Sara Dowhower (1989) surveys the research on repeated reading and concludes that the procedure does help readers to increase in oral reading speed and accuracy and helps them to understand more of what

they are reading. She suggests then that teachers should be using repeated reading in the classroom. She suggests that teachers use repeated reading in direct instruction with the basal readers. Dowhower also suggests teachers set up reading centers that include tape recorded stories with which students can repeatedly read along. She also cites Koskinen and Blum (1986) and suggests paired reading as a cooperative learning activity. She concludes by saying that now that we know repeated reading works, the challenge is to put "research into practice".

O'Shea and O'Shea (1988) look at the problem of finding appropriate reading material for educable mentally handicapped and learning disabled students. They claim that teachers often solve the problem by giving worksheet assignments and drilling with flashcards. The authors suggest repeated reading as an alternative to these practices. They too look at studies on repeated reading, Samuels (1979) and O'Shea, Sindlear, and O'Shea (1985) and conclude that repeated reading helps word recognition become more automatic and therefore "frees" the reader to attend to understanding the material.

O'Shea and O'Shea also suggest using repeated reading with direct instruction, peer reading, and in learning centers. In addition, they also suggest two practices to use along with repeated reading to enhance comprehension. The authors suggest that after rereading a passage a teacher should use either the cloze or maze task to check comprehension. The authors conclude that handicapped learners should be rereading passages instead of reviewing flashcards repeatedly. They also suggest fluency as a goal of reading instruction.

Lopardo and Sadow (1982) use Samuels' method of repeated reading (1979) to set up criteria and procedures to use repeated reading with college age students. Repeated reading usually uses oral reading, however, because they were working with college students, Lopardo and Sadow used silent reading as well. The subjects in the study read a

passage aloud until the criterion was met. They then read a passage at the same level silently until the criterion was met and they moved into a more difficult level.

Lopardo and Sadow set the criterion for silent reading speed at 200 words per minute. The criterion for oral reading was set at 100 words per minute based on their testing of 91 disabled students. The authors set the criterion for word recognition at 95% accuracy, which is normally set for an instructional level. The passages were read aloud to teachers who recorded miscues and rate.

Lopardo and Sadow (1982) used their method and criteria at Chicago State University and claim that it was well received by the college students. They conclude that repeated reading appears to provide good practice in fluency for students.

Timothy Rasinski (1988) claims that reading instruction has not been "overly concerned" with developing students' reading fluency. Rasinski quotes Allington (1983) in calling fluency a "neglected goal" of reading instruction. He also states that if fluency is going to be taught, each individual teacher needs to see that it is included in his or her program. Rasinski turns to Samuels' method of repeated reading (1979) and comments that there is "little doubt" that the method works. He then poses the problem of how to implement repeated reading in the classroom.

Rasinski goes on to suggest that repeated reading needs to be made meaningful and gives several ways to do that. He suggests that teachers create situations where students must read aloud and practice with repeated reading. Rasinski also suggests cross-age tutoring where older students practice a selection and then read to or read the selection with younger students. Rasinski also offers taped readings where older students tape record themselves reading a book orally in order for younger students to listen. The older students would practice so that the taping would be fluent.

Rasinski (1988) also suggests that teachers should read orally to model fluent reading for the students. Rasinski points out that whichever

way repeated reading is implemented, it should be presented in a natural and enjoyable way.

Gonzales and Elijah (1975) studied the effects of rereading on the informal reading inventory (IRI). They point out that there is a difference between the procedure used in a reading lesson and the way an IRI is administered. When giving an IRI, a student is asked to read a selection orally instead of reading silently at first sight. Therefore, a students' score may not be accurate.

The purpose of the study was to look at the reading performance of third grade students after repeated readings at their instructional and frustrational levels. The authors were testing to see if after rereading a passage, the number of errors would decrease. The subjects were asked to read a passage orally and then to reread the passage. Both readings were taped so that errors could be recorded.

The results of the study show that rereading did reduce the number of errors at both levels. Gonzales and Elijah (1975) conclude that when a passage becomes familiar through rereading, it becomes less difficult for the reader. They conclude that their study supports the practice of reading silently and then rereading orally during a reading lesson.

After his review of current literature on rereading, Samuel Perez (1989) claims that rereading will benefit the secondary reader in several ways. He points out that a student cannot possibly gain all he or she needs to from a single reading of the text. He states that a reader can gain new insight each time he rereads. Perez reminds the teacher that we need to give students reasons for rereading and show them the effectiveness of the method.

Sindelar, Monda and O'Shea (1990) did a study to see if the effects of rereading would be the same on learning disabled students and non-disabled students. The authors tested the subjects at both the instructional and mastery levels. The results of the study showed that repeated reading did increase reading rate and recall. The study showed significant gains for both the learning disabled students and the non-disabled students.

When attention was directed to comprehension, both groups were able to recall more details through repeated reading.

Sindelar, Monda and O'Shea (1990) also conclude that their findings are significant because even students reading at mastery level had improvement. They conclude that repeated reading is effective for the learning disabled readers and mastery level readers, as well.

Timothy Rasinski (1990) paired twenty third grade subjects from high, average, and low ability groups. The students in the pairs alternated between rereading the passage and listening to the teacher reread the passage following along silently. The purpose of the study was to see if repeated reading and repeated listening while reading activities would increase reading speed and word recognition. No significant difference was found for either skill, whether a child read first or listened first.

Rasinski's findings were that both activities were effective in improving reading rate and word recognition accuracy. He also concludes that both were equivalent in improving fluency. Rasinski's findings give an alternative method to repeated reading and give teachers two effective techniques to improve students' fluency.

Sarah Dowhower (1987) studied the effects of repeated reading with second grade transitional students. The study was set up to see the effects of repeated reading on readers' rate, accuracy, comprehension, and reading in meaningful phrases. Dowhower divided eighteen students into two groups; assisted and unassisted. The subjects reread practice passages until a speed criterion was met. Each subject was also given a transfer passage each time.

Dowhower (1987) drew several conclusions from the results of the study. The "major" conclusion of the study was that repeated reading is effective. The subjects' reading rate and accuracy improved as well as prosodic reading. After rereading, the subjects were able to read in meaningful phrases rather than word by word. Dowhower also concludes that practicing several stories rather than just one story is even more effective. Dowhower also found that there was little difference between

children who worked independently and those who used a read - along procedure. Dowhower states that repeated reading can and should be an important part of the reading program.

Much of the research done on repeated reading is based on the theory of automatic information processing in reading. (LaBerge and Samuels 1974). LaBerge and Samuels describe a model of information processing. The model traces visual information through many stages of processing. The model includes two criteria; accuracy and automaticity. The criteria LaBerge and Samuels used for automaticity is that a skill is automatic when "it can complete its processing while attention is directed elsewhere".

"The model of automaticity is based on the assumption that the transformation of written stimuli into meanings involves a sequence of stages." (LaBerge and Samuels 1974). In the article, LaBerge and Samuels trace the stages of reading from letter to word to phrases. The reader also must process meaning for each word.

In 1973 LaBerge and Samuels conducted a study with automatic processing. Subjects were asked to repeatedly name letters and words. At the end of the testing, the subjects named familiar letters faster than they named unfamiliar letters. LaBerge and Samuels concluded that the subjects were still using attention to make associations and had not reached a level of automaticity in a period of twenty days. The researchers conclude that practice leads to automaticity. Automatic retrieval comes through repetition. They also claim that through repetition material can be reorganized into higher level units if the reader pays attention to what he is practicing. LaBerge and Samuels point out that if a child is comfortable at a lower level unit, word by word, they may be reluctant to go to a high level unit or phrase.

LaBerge and Samuels (1974) conclude that all readers must go through the same stages of learning to read but they go through the stages at different rates. They see readers as acquiring many different subskills when learning to read. They also use this model to look at comprehension.

The authors conclude that if word recognition becomes automatic, then the reader can shift his attention to understanding the story or passage. If the reader in not decoding automatically and reading aloud, they are simply "word calling" and not attending to comprehension. The goal of teachers then should be to get readers to be able to decode automatically so that they can concentrate on understanding and bringing meaning to what is being read.

In her study, Carol Chomsky (1976) worked with five slow readers from a third grade class who could decode but could not read a "page of simple material". All five students had a lot of phonics training and could decode single words but could not put that to use in the context of a story. Chomsky also felt that the students had "ceased participating" in the reading process. She wanted to "capture their attention and make large amounts of textual material available". Chomsky began her work with the children with repeated listening to a tape recorded story. She wanted the children to become completely familiar with the story by reading silently while listening. The five students continued listening and reading along until they had reached oral reading fluency. The next step was to get the students to interact with the text through language games. This was so that the children would begin to actively interact with the text instead of rote recognition.

During the study the children relistened to the tape and practiced reading aloud into the tape. Chomsky would listen to the tapes each week. It took most of the children twenty listenings to achieve reading fluency for their first book. As the children progressed, each book took less time.

Parents and teachers noted a change in behavior and attitude in the children during the study. Some of the students began reading at home and writing stories. Their success seemed to motivate them to try again.

Chomsky used the games to have the children working with word and sentence analysis and synthesis. She also had the students writing. The children also has flashcards for words that they were not recognizing out of context. They also engaged in activities and games with the

flashcards. By the end of the study, they were not spending as much time with the games but reading to Chomsky and discussing the stories.

Chomsky (1976) concludes that the approach was a success. The students who had not been reading at all had gained practice in reading and had been exposed to many different books. Their attitudes changed and they became active in the process of reading again. Their confidence had been built and they had experienced success.

In 1979, Fleisher, Jenkins and Pany conducted two experiments to look at the effects on comprehension when students were taught to decode rapidly. The study involved fourth and fifth graders. The poor readers in the study were already receiving remedial instruction.

Poor readers were drilled with flashcards until each word was recognized in approximately one second. The subjects were next tested on a word list. If they were not successful with the word list, they were again drilled with flashcards. The students were then given a passage to read. The directions given to the students stressed reading for meaning. The students read the passage aloud and errors were recorded. After reading the subjects were asked comprehension questions and the students were also given a cloze passage to complete orally.

The students that did not receive training were given a word list and a passage to read aloud. After reading these, subjects were also asked comprehension questions and given a cloze passage.

The results of Fleisher, Jenkins, and Pany's 1979 study showed that the good readers were more accurate decoders. The training did raise the level of decoding for the poor readers but they did not comprehend more because of their more rapid decoding. Fleisher et al's findings do not show that rapid decoding improves comprehension. The results did show that good readers seem to use syntactic and semantic information whereas poor readers do not.

Fleisher, Jenkins, and Pany (1979) conducted a second experiment. The researchers followed the same procedure as in the first experiment but added several steps. This time the subjects were trained in decoding until

they reached levels attained by good readers. Secondly, students were not overtly timed when reading passages. Thirdly, subjects were trained in reading phrases instead of word by word decoding.

Fleisher, Jenkins, and Pany found that the results were basically the same for both experiments. The comprehension scores of the poor readers were still lower than the good readers. The authors conclude that single word training is not sufficient enough to improve comprehension. The authors turn to the research of Samuels (1979) and discuss repeated reading which practices in context. They feel this is more like the actual task of reading and suggest that it may be more worthwhile than studying words in isolation.

John Downing (1982) looked at the research which discusses whether or not reading is one skill or many different subskills. Downing concludes that either way, "the key feature of every skill is the integration of the complete set of behaviors that make the total pattern." Downing claims that the only way integration is learned is through practice. He says that although teachers' materials and methods do make a difference, practice is a key. He suggests that children will get the practice they need from a language experience rather than by a "skills" approach.

"Although the ability to decode words in print will not assure good reading comprehension", J. Lloyd Eldredge (1988) states," good reading comprehension will not occur without it." Eldredge discusses the fact that poor decoding skills do inhibit comprehension. Although good decoding skills may not improve comprehension, they do aid a reader in understanding the story.

Eldredge (1988) offers several strategies that can be used with children with poor decoding skills to aid in comprehension. The first method is the Neurological Impress method. In this method a teacher and student read aloud together at a rapid rate. A second idea is to use audio tapes. Students can listen to prerecorded stories while they follow along

with their fingers. The student can also read aloud along with the tape. Both of these methods can be use to build confidence in a struggling reader.

A third method is repeated reading. A child rereads a passage repeatedly to reach a faster reading rate. Samuels research (1979) showed repeated reading to increase reading rate and decrease word recognition errors.

Eldredge concludes by saying that all the methods discussed free readers from decoding so that they can pay attention to meaning. He also says that because the methods repeatedly expose children to the same words they can aid in decoding. Each method also models reading phrase instead of reading word by word.

A study was also conducted by Taylor, Wade and Yekovich (1985) which involved reading phrases instead of isolated words. The researchers worked with fifth grade students to see the effects of phrasing and repeated reading on a reader's recall. The researchers constructed their own passages for the study. The passages were typed so that only one phrase appeared on a line. Each reader read the passage under four conditions; phrased-practice, phrased-non practice, non phrased practice, and non phrased-non practice. At first the subjects were asked to tell everything they remembered. They were then asked more specific questions.

This study seems to indicate that the rereading facilitated understanding more than phrasing. The researchers did find that practice did not help poor readers as much when the passage was in narrative form.

O'Shea, Sindelar, and O'Shea (1985) studied the effects of repeated reading and attentional cues on comprehension and fluency. They felt that many researchers assume that readers automatically shift their attention to comprehension when fluency is established. In their study, they had one group rereading for rate and the other group rereading to retell the story. Fluency and comprehension increased for both groups, however, those cued to comprehension always understood more than the fluency group.

Therefore, O'Shea et al. concluded that the data suggest that repeated reading facilitates significant comprehension gains.

Koskinen and Blum (1986) took the research on repeated reading and used the practice with pairs of children within the same classroom. The children were taught how to be readers and listeners. One partner repeatedly read a passage, while the other listened and gave feedback. While teaching the children the paired reading procedure, the researchers gave the children the analogy of a basketball player shooting foul shots over and over to master the skill. Koskinen and Blum concluded that paired reading is an effective way of giving children practice with meaningful text in order to refine reading skills.

Labbo and Teale (1990) use repeated reading in a cross-age reading program. They combine the practice with prereading and postreading discussions to build the children's' comprehension skills. Labbo and Teale base their program on Hoffman's study and conclusions that oral reading must be a part of a larger cycle. (Hoffman, 1987)

In the study, Labbo and Teale paired fifth grade low readers with kindergartners. The fifth graders chose a story book and practiced reading through repeated reading. They also were involved in group discussions with the teacher to compile comprehension questions to ask the kindergartners. After eight weeks, the fifth graders showed significant improvement in fluency and comprehension. The cross-age program gave the older children a purpose to read orally and gave them additional comprehension strategies to use in their reading.

Keith Topping (1987) writes about the advantages of peer tutoring and paired reading. Topping first describes peer tutoring. He explains it as a one to one "tutorial relationship" that involves a younger and an older child. Topping suggests that there be a difference of at least two years in ability between the students. Topping claims that both gain from the experience. He finds that many teachers have seen how peer tutoring can give the weaker students reading practice. The author points out that if the tutoring situations are planned carefully, a teacher can see gains for both

the tutor and the one being tutored. Topping concludes that children enjoy the method and it is highly interactive for both participants. It also gives both a great amount of time- on - task.

Paired reading allows the child being tutored to be exposed to material at higher readability levels and to be supported through these texts.

Topping suggests that the child being tutored select his or her own book. The method has the tutor and the tutee reading at the same time. If the material is easy enough, the tutor can remain silent and allow the tutee to read aloud alone. During the reading, the tutor can give his partner feedback.

Topping claims that there are several advantages to both methods. Tutors can be easily trained and both participants have the experience of interacting with high interest text. The tutoring sessions are easily fit into the regular classroom routine without a lot of preparation.

Research on repeated reading, as has been shown, provides support for such activities in the classroom in a variety of ways to promote fluency. Cross-age grouping with repeated reading is one of them.

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